

# Moving mountains — Allan Cunningham and the mountains of southern Queensland

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Botanist-explorer Allan Cunningham (1793–1835) played an important role in the exploration of what is now south-eastern Queensland, naming a number of major topographic features. It is evident from his journals and correspondence that later surveyors and cartographers transposed some of his names. This has repercussions for type locality citation, species lists and floras.

## The search for Mount Warning (July–August 1828)

The true position of Cook's Mount Warning in the confusing mountain mass south of Brisbane puzzled Cunningham and Captain Logan, Commandant of the Moreton Bay penal settlement. Cunningham had clearly seen Mount Warning from his vantage point near the Great Dividing Range east of the Darling Downs on his famous expedition of discovery in 1827. However, from Brisbane the view was obscured.

In December 1828, an exploring party under the command of Logan and including Cunningham and Charles Fraser journeyed south from Limestone Hills in search of Mount Warning. Their investigation of the position of Mt Warning and the names given to other peaks in the vicinity is described in Cunningham's report, dated 16 December 1828, to Lieutenant-Governor Darling.

The occupations of Mr Fraser, the Colonial Botanist (whom Your Excellency was pleased to permit to accompany me to Moreton Bay) and myself, for some period after our arrival at that settlement upon the Brisbane, investigating the vegetable productions which so highly invest the banks of that river, did not permit me to prepare for a journey suggested by that excellent commandant, Captain Logan, towards the Mount Warning Ranges, until nearing the end of the month of July.

It was originally our design to penetrate no further to the southward than the base of the Coloscean Range, in which Captain Logan still considered the peak of Mount Warning was situate . . .

With considerable exertion, I climbed to a point in elevation equal to one-third of the extreme altitude of the mountain, when the face became so singularly precipitous, and in consequence the further advance attended altogether with so much danger that I deemed it prudent to proceed no further . . .

Whilst I was occupied taking a set of interesting bearings to points around not previously seen, our indefatigable commandant and Mr Fraser . . . continued their journey to the summit . . .

The cone of Mount Warning, respecting the true situation of which we were divided in opinion, I was gratified in no ordinary degree to see distinctly, amidst a group of mountains nearer the coastline.

The mountain which we had visited . . . was named "Mount Lindesay" as a compliment to the officer commanding his Majesty's 39th Regiment in this colony.

At SSE five miles a very precipitous rocky head, in figure seemingly inaccessible from any point around us, was named "Mount Hooker", in honour of the mutual friend of Mr Fraser and myself, the very learned and scientific Regius Professor of Botany in the University of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup>

## Transposition of Cunningham's place names

In preparation for the separation of the Colony of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859, a Surveyor Bennett drew up a map of the proposed borderline between the colonies. Apparently transposition of Cunningham's names first occurred here (Groom 1947, Steele 1972).

Cunningham's 'Macpherson's Range' ran NW from Mt Glennie to Tamborine. Bennett applied it to the broken mountains running E-W from Point Danger to Wilsons Peak. Cunningham's name Mount Hooker was dropped and Mount Lindsay (sic) used in its place. The 'Mount Lindesay' of Cunningham became Mount Barney.

## Repercussions for botanical data

Thus, collections by Allan Cunningham and Charles Fraser (N.S.W. Colonial Botanist) in 1828, and by Walter Hill (Superintendent of Brisbane Botanic Gardens, later Colonial Botanist of Queensland) in the 1850s–1860s, that are recorded as having come from Mount Lindesay are in fact from Mount Barney. This includes the type specimens of *Acacia brunioides* Cunn., *Bossiaea rupicola* Cunn., *Casuarina rigida* Miq., *Cyathea lindsayanum* W.Hill, *Helichrysum lindsayanum* Domin, *Hovea acutifolia* Cunn. and *Monotoca patens* Cunn.

Cunningham's collection lists from southern Queensland, sent to William Hooker at Kew, are similarly effected by the transposition of the names of landmarks referred to above.<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

1. Mitchell Library, Sydney; Governor's Despatches A 1203.
2. Lists are available on microfiche through the Australian Joint Copying Project and are located in many State and Commonwealth libraries.

## References

- Groom, A. (1949). *One mountain after another*. (Angus & Robertson: Sydney).
- Steele, J. G. (1972). *The explorers of the Moreton Bay District 1770–1830*. (University of Queensland Press: St. Lucia)